

Housing Policies in Turkey: Evolution of TOKI (Governmental Mass Housing Administration) as an Urban Design Tool

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Abstract: With the mission of absorption of the capital through urban renovation, AKP (the Justice and Welfare Party) took over the metropolitan municipality administrations in big cities in 1995, and the Government of the Republic of Turkey in 2002. Together with the 2003 Mass Housing Act, 14 legal regulations were enacted between 2002 and 2008 to expand the field of activity and increase the funds of TOKI (Governmental Mass Housing Administration) which was already established during ANAP (the Motherland Party) Government in 1980s. As a result of those regulations, TOKI, as the “latest goddess of the construction myth”, became the only authorized organization in the field of housing and land production in AKP’s cities. It acquired new duties from generating profit-oriented projects to protecting historical texture, and it was authorized to make and approve zoning plans for the lands and plots handed over to TOKI of the last government (the Justice and Welfare Party) created as an investor-entrepreneur-contractor-performer group. This paper’s aim is to indicate the transformation of TOKI foundation during the last twenty years, and also to prove that TOKI, as a governmental profit-oriented design tool, has demolished the unique DNA/morphological textures of the contemporary Turkish big cities by producing low profiled similar architecture and urbanity in the recent past.

Key words: Governmental urban interventions, urban identity, Mass Housing Administration, social housing.

1. Introduction

Today’s republican big cities in Turkey such as Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir or Bursa as dynamic open systems, with overlapped complex and multiple economical, social and physical conditions, have been morphologically reconstructed through the contemporary urban interventions of the last government AKP (the Justice and Welfare Party) for the last twenty years. The last government, as the postmodern amalgamation of new Islamic idealism, neo-capitalism, liberalism, international commerce and construction business, re-designed/re-produced the contemporary Turkish metropolises. The latest government’s big cities have resembled to each other by presenting a kind of characterless morphology of

Dubai aesthetics and became deprived of its multi-cultural and unique urban and architectural identity according to the Islamic neo-liberal urban manipulations/interventions.

AKP (the Justice and Welfare Party) took over the metropolitan municipality administrations in big cities in 1995, and the government of the Republic of Turkey in 2002. Together with the 2003 Mass Housing Act, 14 legal regulations were enacted between 2002 and 2008 to expand the field of activity and increase the funds of TOKI (Governmental Mass Housing Administration) which was established during another right wing, capitalist governmental party ANAP (the Motherland Party) in 1980s.

TOKI, as a big implementation tool of urban policies and interventions of the last government AKP (the Justice and Welfare Party) which dominates cities of Turkey for the last twenty years, coordinates the entrepreneur, contractor and performer’s relations

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according to the governmental urban expectations, social scenarios, morphological and architectural manipulations/modifications. In this context, TOKI, as the “latest goddess of the construction myth”, became furthermore the only authorized organization in the field of housing and land production in AKP’s cities. It acquired new duties from generating profit-oriented projects to protecting historical texture, and it was authorized to make and approve zoning plans for the lands and plots handed over to TOKI. With 198 new legal regulations since 2002 (new laws and regulations, amendments to existing laws and regulations, statutory decrees, etc.), the government has realized many legislative interventions that encourage the production of an urban-textured environment [1]. The allocation and sales of public lands to the private industry for tourism, mass housing, shopping centres and urban transformation projects, reconfiguration of laws to increase TOKI’s powers, and encouragement of mass housing production have triggered neo-liberal space production practices, which have become widespread with large-scale urban projects.

In this case, only the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality has allocated especially the lands and plots of the public to various urban projects, mainly through their sale to urban transformation projects, damaging the autonomous morphological structure of the city, destructing the unique textures and memories by making more than 3,900 plan modifications in four years following 2005 (that means three plan modifications a day) in order to create the optimum physical and social conditions for TOKI to accomplish its investments and to increase profits [1].

According to the new urban policies, only in Istanbul, TOKI (Governmental Mass Housing Administration) had the chance to construct 160,000 of 250,000 residences which have been completed and licensed since 1995 when Recep Tayyip Erdogan (today’s president) became the Mayor. In addition to 250,000 residences, more than 500,000 new residences are being added in Istanbul’s geography. In the city,

including only 350,000 residences in 1960, the number of residences increased to 1.4 million in 1984, and to 3.4 million in 2000. At present, the construction of approximately 4.2 million residences has been completed in Istanbul [1].

In this manuscript, different applications and partnerships with public and private individual and/or legal corporations operated by TOKI in terms of governmental urban vision, mission and strategies are going to be discussed.

Furthermore, this paper’s aim is accordingly based on political, economical and social development process of the TOKI. During the last decay, it possesses as an urban investor/representative and implementer of the government by making a comparative evaluation of TOKI mass housing projects in different big cities such as Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, Bursa or Antalya. This paper’s aim is also to prove how TOKI demolishes the unique DNA/morphological textures of the contemporary Turkish big cities by producing low profiled, similar/look alike architecture and low quality urbanity.

2. Mass Housing Policies and Urbanity

In the late 19th century, huge migration from rural-to-urban created housing shortages in cities which led to unauthorized house building. Although industrialization initiated in the late 19th century and spread first through Europe, its impacts reached Turkey nearly 50 years later, which made Turkey experience a different urbanization process as compared to developed countries.

As the first mass housing implementations of the Ottoman Empire between 1861~1876, Akaretler Row Houses consisted of 138 units designed by the Armenian architect Sarkis Balyan, located in Besiktas, Istanbul. Ottoman Sultan Abdulaziz had supported, organized and realized the first mass housing project for the privileged army officers. These houses are integrated to the city and represent the continuity of the original urban morphology of 19th century’s Istanbul.

Afterwards, respectively, Taksim Surp Agop Row Houses organised by the Surp Agop Armenian Charitable Foundation for the Armenian people in Istanbul in 1890, Tayyare Mass Housing Project for homeless people in Cibali-Laleli, Istanbul between 1919~1922 and employee apartments as the first mass housing project for white collar people in Ankara in 1920 were realised by the Ottoman last palatial government. The period of the Ottoman Empire between 1840~1920 is the time of the apartments, row houses, and suburban houses as representatives of relative modernity [2].

There will be five major periods beginning from the proclamation of the Republic of Turkey in 1923 to the current era. In this sense, the housing provision policies were developed by both: the state and private entrepreneurs. These major periods are as follows:

(1) 1923~1945 (proclamation of the Turkish Republic): urbanization and new modern policies; socialist urban implementations as a design tool of modern, secularist society; housing policy centred around the logic of nationalism rather than the needs of capitalist urbanization; independent lodgings for high ranking officials and military officers, terraced houses, garden city settlements built by the state building cooperatives; shaping the modern socialist/nationalist city by public building and housing projects [2];

(2) 1945~1965 (Rightist Democrat Party Government period): enactment of the Law of Property Ownership; labour market dynamics; populist modernity—property developers. The ministry of public works and settlements, established in 1958, was responsible for the formulation of the general framework of urban planning—shaping and housing strategy. First capitalist, vehicle oriented urban implementations, born of squatters, building cooperatives, first sparks of the apartment period, one- or two-storey terraced houses (or villas), apartment typology became widespread;

(3) 1965~1984 (capitalist policies, first globalization period): crisis of Turkish modernity, industrialization



Fig. 1 Akaretler Row Houses, in 1876 as the first mass housing implementation of Ottoman Empire.



Fig. 2 Tayyare apartments, first mass housing implementation of Turkish Government in 1922.

and the mass migration from rural to urban areas; governmental inventions in legal and financial regulations; liberalization of the market and the financial system, economic crisis, housing sector crisis; uncontrolled urban expansion and existence of squatters and slum peripheries (unauthorized housing developments); First Squatter Housing Law in 1966 [2]; four different Five Years Financial Development Plans—regulations by rightist governments; new financial foundations; the need of a strong-minded mass housing planning including the formulation of housing policies and the economic and social dynamics; enactments of the Law of Property Ownership; First and Second Mass Housing Law in 1981 and 1984; building sector development according to governmental encouragements and municipality collaborations; execution of mass housing acts and rise of housing cooperatives; apartment-period; the emergence of property developers, rise of housing—building cooperatives as pioneers of housing sector; individual-small scaled attempts as small scale house builders named as “*yapsatci*” (in Turkish);

suburban movement of middle income groups and suburban housings; establishment of governmental foundation of housing development administration (fund of TOKI) in 1984;

(4) 1984~2002 (first neo-liberalist capitalism, second globalism, mass housing period): liberal policies and transformational period on urban areas according to/based on the global neo-liberalist capitalist governmental (ANAP—Rightist Motherland Party) policies; privatization and domination of private investors; urban poverty and capitalist urbanization; new urban settings of the post 1980 period; enactment of the Mass Housing Law and first mass housing applications; mass housing emerged as a commercial concept in the housing market, while the social housing corresponds to the low-cost housing production by subsidies of the state, local governments or social institutions [3]; establishment of State Planning Organization and State Housing Bank; “gated communities” as new housing concepts existed as representatives of isolated luxurious residential areas of the wealthiest groups developed by private construction companies in suburbs, around metropolitan boundaries or located at the prestigious districts of the city centre in smaller plots; building cooperatives established by the small-scale consumer associations (apartment blocks); mass housing companies established by the private sector: housing units to accommodate large number of families (apartment blocks) and housing units to accommodate single families (detached houses, villas); building cooperatives allied to local governments (municipalities): apartment blocks, transformation of municipalities into important actors in the de-facto formulation of housing policy [3]; mass housing projects on state owned lands by TOKI, aiming to regulate housing market by the contemporary AKP (Justice and Welfare Party);

(5) 2002~2015 (neo-liberalist, soft-islamist AKP regime, third globalization): transformation of the state, institutionalising neo-liberal free market economy;

privatization policies, public land allocations, housing mobilizations, economic integration to the global first world, legal and institutional changes in mass housing policy [3]; state’s involvement in the housing, establishment of the squatter settlements and Housing Directory; urban transformation scenarios (capitalist urbanization); projects, applications, shaping cities, regulation of the urban space to define the fundamental governmental policies; manipulation of the daily life, gentrification attempts; preventing “unhealthy and ugly urbanization”, pointing out the government’s determination to construct “habitable” cities [3]; legalization of the urban phenomenon slum regions—squatter settlements, integrating slum districts into the contemporary city, new low income housing policies as election strategies of AKP; institutionalising process of TOKI from credit agency to the space coefficient between 1984 and today supported by the state or local governments, as the most potential urban design tool of the contemporary government, symbiotic relation between TOKI (Governmental Mass Housing Administration) and contemporary government; adequacy of housing provision of TOKI in meeting housing need [3]; the dominant typology invariably consists of the mass-produced TOKI apartment blocks.

There have mainly been three different mass housing investments in Turkey during the last hundred years. These are as follows:

(1) mass housing as government investment:

- social housings (TOKI);
- public housings;
- disaster housing;

(2) private investment mass housing:

- social housings;
- mass housings;

(3) “mixed” investments: governmental land allocation + private investment.

According to Tekeli [1], the housing provision policies in Turkey can be divided into six different groups which are:

- individual housing provisions—single building cooperatives;
- developers' housing provisions/developer as large capital builder's housing provisions;
- mass housing corporation's production (governmental (TOKI));
- individual/semi-organized squatter housing (in Turkish: *Gecekondu*) provisions;
- housing provision of municipality cooperatives;
- building cooperative associations [3].

In general, there had been mass housings, public housings, social housings, self-help housings, and lodgement type of housings produced to indicate a particular housing terminology, policy and strategy of the Turkish state during the last two centuries.

Since 2000, the government action plan of the Justice and Development Party—AKP, declared the will to “open up to the world” and “become fully integrated to the global economic system. In terms of governmental urban interventions as a part of global neo-liberalism policies, the mass housing administration has started to be a critical tool for urban transformation projects in metropolitan areas and in the organization and planning of city space” [3]. In other words, housing has emerged as one of the policy tools for the governments used for stimulating the economy. On the one hand, transformation of the urban space; on the other. In this case low income housing policies are only small parts of a larger urban renewal projects. The housing policy which becomes highly important, opens up discussions on aspects like social policy, urbanization, urban poverty and social housing. Unfortunately, governmental mass housing projects were mostly not targeted at the low income groups, rather they supplied housing for the middle and high income groups [3].

3. Governmental Mass Housing Administration: TOKI

Housing problem in Turkey has been recognized as a problem based on the quantitative insufficiency of the

number of produced housing projects since the end of the World War II (1945) until the increase in the production by property developers by the enactment of the Law of Property Ownership in 1965. However, after this period, a new term began, and the housing problem definitions have changed their directions: production of mass housing was increased in this term respectively by the enactments of the Housing Cooperatives Law in 1969 so the quantity problem in housing was transformed into the quality problem [4]. The increasing demand for housing in the following years, especially in 1970s, resulted in illegal housing.

Developments since the existing stock became inadequate due to high migration rates from rural to urban areas. This brought social, economic and physical burdens to the cities by creating unauthorized housing, inefficient urban services, congestion and increasing urban density problems. The most effective ones of the legal regulations during these periods were the two mass housing laws which were enacted through the end of 1970s.

In 1984, according to the Mass Housing Law, a fund for mass housing was created including several sources of income under the Mass Housing Law No. 2985. In the same year, a new and legal entity, the Housing Development and Public Participation Administration was established with Law No. 2983 [1]. In addition, a new legal entity, TOKI was also established as a state agency in the same year. The priorities of TOKI are defined as to reduce uneven distribution of resources on housing provision, to balance allocation of housing investments, to meet the housing needs of low income groups, to develop alternatives for opening new residential areas with infrastructure following the cleaning up of squatter settlements, to provide financial support for housing construction, to pool public funds for urbanization and house production, to obtain new sources and mobilize them for housing purposes, to improve construction quality in urban settlements, to regulate urban rent and increase land supply, to improve transportation and other urban infrastructure

facilities and to enhance planned urbanization within the country [1].

In 1980s, housing provision was implemented as mass housing by the hand of the public sector particularly by TOKI which encouraged the planned urbanization and accelerated the housing provision. Between the period of 1984 and 2003, the basic strategy of TOKI has been to provide credits for social housing projects and its housing provision capacity has been up to a certain limit until the year 2002 [1].

Since the housing development and public participation administration had to undertake two different functions, in 1990 housing development administration was transformed into a separate entity with governmental Decree No. 412 [1]. After the first decade of the millennium, the role of TOKI has changed regarding direct and indirect intervention to the housing market.

Real estate investments in Turkey, has been demonstrating a considerable momentum, especially in the post-2000 period. In particular, the “large scale/mega projects” concentrated at the periphery, playing a significant role as the urban space takes shape. The industry capital has tended to diffuse the over-accumulation, generated in the wake of the 2000~2001 economic crisis, in the real estate market. The Mass Housing Law in Turkey was totally abolished in 2001 [1].

In this case AKP, as the new and last ruling government party after 2002 election, described/designed the new mission, vision, role and duties of the governmental mass housing development administration, its applications, partnerships according to new housing provisions and urban policies.

In 2002, the administration is associated with the ministry of public works and settlement. Besides, the real estate and monetary funds of the Real Estate Bank had been transferred to TOKI [3]. This situation increased its financial power. After then, TOKI consorted with the prime ministry in 2003. According to the neo-capitalist, post-islamist policies of AKP

governmental expanded regulations, new functions were added to the Mass Housing Law in 2003 [4] which are “establishing companies related with housing sector or participating in those that have already been established”; granting individual and mass housing credits; granting credits for projects intended for improvement of rural architecture, transformation of squatter areas, preservation and restoration of historical and regional architecture; and making interest subsidies for all such credits, where deemed necessary; developing projects both in Turkey and abroad directly or through the agency its participations; carrying out or appointing others to carry out applications for housing, infrastructure and social facilities; implementing or appointing others to implement profit-oriented projects to ensure sources to the benefit of the administration; building, promoting and supporting construction of housing units as well as social facilities and infrastructures in locations where disasters take place.

In 2004, TOKI was authorized “to realize all kinds and scales of urban development plans, to have made all these type of plans and to alter these plans in areas determined as the mass housing settlement regions; expropriate all the annexes and buildings on or inside the lands and areas owned by real and legal entities, within the framework of its duties under law; and to develop renovation of squatter areas for eliminating or regaining via rehabilitation to make construction implementations and to perform financial regulations. Also, in this framework, TOKI is authorized to determine the construction prices under the realized construction costs, considering the income status of squatter areas regions “residents, current construction costs, natural disasters and current economic status of the provinces in which implementation are made.” TOKI has also cooperated with central and local government agencies in certain projects.

In 2004, all the duties and the authority of the urban land office have been transferred to TOKI, with the Law No. 5273, including the transfer of 64.5 million

M2 of land [1]. With these entire legal regulations, the TOKI had become the single responsible authority in housing sector in Turkey. The administration became the most important executive body in definition of settlement policies as a funder, land provider and enabler at the local level. In this framework, the administration began to provide almost 10% of the housing need in Turkey [1]. Regarding the last governmental regulations on TOKI, the mentioned foundation's contemporary missions and duties are as follows:

- renovation of squatter areas;
- provision new housing stocks in cooperation with municipalities;
- production of luxurious housing for the purpose of creating sources for social housing projects;
- production of land with infrastructure in order to decrease land prices;
- credit support to individuals, cooperatives and municipalities;
- provision mortgage loans with long maturities and low yield for the beneficiaries of the projects;
- application of disaster housing;
- application of agriculture village projects;
- application of migrant dwellings;
- restoration of historically and/or culturally important buildings;
- organization and application of international projects;
- organization of new partnerships of TOKI with many private investors [1].

Within the period from 1984 to the end of 2002, TOKI provided credits for 940,000 dwelling units under the credits extended for cooperative housing [1]. According to the information from TOKI, it has reached 600,000 dwelling units between 2003 and 2014 in 81 provinces, 675 counties and 1,480 building sites under the scope of "mobilization of housing provision with planned urbanization", started within the emergency action plan and programs of the government [5].

During the last two periods of AKP Government, TOKI indicated that 346,992 dwellings are produced as social housing: 190,786 of them are for low and middle income households, for the urban poor, who usually cannot afford to purchase, "become a kind of tenant in the meanwhile and pay rents not to a landlord but to the authority by giving no down payment and paying a monthly amount for up to 20~110 [5]; 102,205 of them are for low income households; And 40,731 dwellings are produced in the transformation of squatter housing in Turkey.

TOKI, which guides the direction of housing policy since its establishment and in particular since 2003, has implemented effective policies in terms of social housing. As a governmental foundation, TOKI has become one of the authorities in Turkey in providing affordable dwellings to households in need. TOKI provides affordable housing for low and middle income groups by providing long maturities and low yield for the beneficiaries of the project. Regarding the contemporary data [5], TOKI provides 10% of housing necessity considering the population increase in Turkey. TOKI declares that 85% of the governmental mass housing investments have been realized according to the social housing concepts; but only 25% of them are providing social housing conditions [5]. According to the official declaration of TOKI [5], as the Governmental Mass Housing Administration, with the models it has developed, it functions as an umbrella rather than a competing body in the housing sector in Turkey in awareness of its responsibility as a guiding, supervising and educating organization and undertakes a significant role in production prioritizing the demands and solvency of the target masses in need. It should be pointed out that 900,000 individuals profited directly or indirectly from involvement in TOKI's projects [5].

The new vision of TOKI (Governmental Mass Housing Administration) within the scope of the programme of the government of the Republic of Turkey, is to realize the project target of one million

housing units by the end of 2023. In this context the TOKI administration carries on its housing production activities throughout the country in view of priorities and needs:

- urban regeneration and slum transformation projects in cooperation with municipalities;
- social housing projects toward the middle and low income group;
- establishing example settlement units in medium scale provinces and districts;
- development of the historic fabric and local architecture;
- increase in educational and social facilities as well as other facilities, forestations and landscapes, etc.;
- production of lands with substructure shall be highlighted [5].

Within the framework of 2023 vision announced by the administration [5], the first priority of TOKI is production of housing with increased quality and qualifications. Local and horizontal architecture shall be preferred and care shall be taken for construction of life spaces in compatibility with a city's own architecture, culture, values and geographical peculiarities. Regarding to the 2015 declaration, TOKI shall furthermore act as a pioneer in "urban transformation." 40% of the social type housing units are intended to be realized within the scope of the urban transformation/renewal projects.

Due to the "Report for Real Estate Sector in 2023 Vision" prepared by GYODER (Association of Real Estate and Real Estate Investment Companies), production of 7.56 million houses is suggested for the 12 year period between 2012~2023. TOKI, with its rapid housing production practices, aims to meet 5%~10% of the housing need of Turkey, which currently has been realized as 9%. It is also estimated that within the prospective 20 years, approximately 6.7 million housing units shall be demolished and reconstructed throughout the country.

Social housing program of TOKI targets the poor, low and middle income people who cannot own a

housing unit under the existing market conditions. Considering the distribution of the housing projects realized by TOKI, 15% of the same consists of "fund raising by method of revenue sharing" and 85% of "Social Housing" projects [5]. The sales prices of the housing units produced for the poor citizens (one of the category of TOKI's social type housing program) do not include the cost of land.

Within the scope of the Law No. 5162 that underlines "the prevention of shanty settlements in Turkish cities in cooperation with local authorities and the transformation of the existing shanty settlements". TOKI has been assigned to be in service in the urban renewal projects and has also been carrying out its projects in this sense [5]. According to this declaration published in 2015, TOKI's practices constitute a model for local governments and other actors of the housing sector. TOKI not only transforms slums, extremely intensive shanty settlements, areas with a high risk of natural disasters (earthquake, flood, landslide, etc.) and historical urban areas as well as urban areas, whose



Fig. 3 TOKI housing in Adana (city of south Turkey), 2015.



Fig. 4 TOKI housing in Ankara city, Turkey, 2015.

economic lifetime is over, but also tries to prevent formation of new slum areas with the houses it has produced for narrow income groups. Within the years 2003~2015, TOKI administration has been several times enlarged and did employed 669 personnel, including 417 technical, 217 administrative educated, 32 legal advisory staff and three health services [5] and transformed into an international whale investor, a holding company of high profit.

Constructions abroad are funded through post-disaster donations and humanitarian relieves, and the administration conducts its activities (through protocols regarding construction) as the implementation unit of these projects (in line with official assignments). In this context; there are TOKI implementations in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Somalia [5]. Furthermore, according to the recent negotiations with many corporations, there are establishments in 91 countries; particularly regional countries are in progress, and memorandums of “cooperation in the field of mass housing development” are being signed with various countries [5]. There is an international awareness of the housing supply model and social housing projects of TOKI, which has been awarded United Nations Habitat Certificate of Honour due to its activities and works at international scale, and providing housing loans to low and middle income families [6]. In 2008, TOKI was awarded the “International Award for Entrepreneurship in Real Estate and Housing Development” sponsored by EIRE (Expo Italia Real Estate). In the same year, TOKI’s Erzincan city, Downtown Quarter Urban Renewal-Slum Transformation Project was selected as a “Good Practice” in the Habitat Best Practices Award organization. One year later, North Ankara Entrance Urban Renewal Development Project of TOKI—TOBAS (Municipal Mass Housing Construction Foundation) Partnership was selected as one of the “Good Practices” for the year 2009 by the international selection committee of the UN-Habitat Business Awards, in China [5].

4. Conclusions

Contemporary domestic space as an economical value, profit or property (house) and dwelling (space where you feel well, lost heaven, oasis, security, nest of innocence, platform for many hobbies, private aroma of happiness and pleasure) is a multi-faced, hybrid concept, which represents accommodation as a temporary but perpetual, anonym but individual process. It should also be a dream—space, space of dreams, existence of traditional or modern human being. Today’s house and housing concepts should represent the unique, flexible, sustainable, multi-functional contemporary architectural identity in a special relation with the city/place, should create high profiled domestic architecture as a natural but artificial part of unique urban morphology.

In contrary to TOKI’s declarations, there are still many social, physical, urban and architectural problems underlined in the last HABITAT report regarding housing implementations and TOKI applications related to the especially last governmental housing policies [7]. These are as follows: no interactive relation between the actors such as government, municipality, construction bureaucrats, user (the owner of the flats), client/investor, urban planner, real estate developer, designer, and contractor (no open, shared, transparent application process); low profiled architectural identity, repetition of non-architecture in every region in the country; no distinguishable design scenarios, no site plan differentiations, no classified plan typology; no variations of plan organizations—architecture according to social housing, mass housing, public housing or group housing concepts; low quality of construction technology, constructional materials; no policy for energy savings, low quality of infrastructure, installation, insulation, ventilation; no sustainability, no consideration of the climatic, environmental, local urban realities of the predicted residential districts for investment; profit oriented investments, low quality of architectural and constructional work taking mostly



Fig. 5 TOKI Housing in Cekmece Province of Istanbul, Turkey, 2015.



Fig. 6 TOKI housing in Atakoy Province of Istanbul, 2015.

cost and construction duration into account; no conversation of historical, unique characteristics of cities or urban regions; demolishing the DNA of Turkish big cities; no consideration of urban master plan, zoning legislations, housing rules; no optimum balance between construction zones and landscape, private and public areas; no suggestion for public space; low physical conditions for children, elderly or disabled people; 80% of housings implemented for high income customers [5], payment and credit difficulties for low income people.

During the last two decades, TOKI (Governmental Mass Housing Administration) transformed from a social, public foundation which ensures social, physical and economical proper permanent housing conditions for low income people, into a profit oriented investor for high income customers as a dominant holding on the cities. The residential areas created by TOKI cannot provide spatial cohesion and produce weak or awry socio-spatial relation with urban areas. These areas are not planned and designed regarding to the integration either with the urban areas, both

spatially and socially or in itself. Furthermore, there is no concern of compliance in the planning and design of residential areas with specific features of the regions; rather single forms of applications are preferred in the production. Without associating the existing urban areas, the mass housing areas have also problems in their own residential areas. Therefore, it can be stated that the mass housing areas produced by TOKI particularly for low and low middle income groups cannot contribute to the production of urban space and urbanization. The main aim of the administration is quantitative rather than qualitative [1].

Generally, designing high density lots and using the same typology on every site are the main source of the problems in TOKI housing projects which are triggering the low profiled design and uniformity of Turkish cities. Regional features such as urbanity and urban morphology, topography, climate, cultural or regional differences are ignored by the organization. In other words, both environmental and cultural sustainability are disregarded in the projects. Turkey, as a developing country, requires substantial amount of housing stock. TOKI as the pioneer of mass housing foundation, has a great significance in the housing production in Turkey. However, both in TOKI projects and in general, sustainability has not been a central issue for the architectural practice in Turkey. On the other hand, sustainability is an inevitable issue when the environmental, social, cultural and economical benefits are concerned.

There is an increasing acceleration in the production of mass housing projects currently in Turkey. In countries like Turkey, where the pace of population increase and migration from rural areas has been very high. Consequently, urbanization process has been experienced in a short time span. Demand for urban land and housing rises to a very high level. Particularly for the low and middle income groups, the question of acquiring houses in a liveable and planned environment has reached to a high levels [2]. Most of the social housing projects, apart from those serving as

a social control mechanisms, are used to a large extent as a legitimization for “cleaning” the urban centres of the poor neighbourhoods perceived as tumours of city by the government.

According to the general evaluation of housing provision process in Turkey, almost all of the mass housing projects implemented recently for low or high income groups, in the periphery of the city centre, go into uniformity in terms of the spatial organizations of units. They worked as supply and subsidy mechanism, rather than an architectural entity. Mass housing projects in Turkey define uniformity in which standardization or similarities as well as the minor differences can be followed especially by the characteristics of architectural design such as the spatial alignments, and spatial relations of the mass housing units [4].

Mass housing units of TOKI do not point out a kind of consensus between government, municipality, contractor and inhabitants in terms of urban and architectural identity. They do not represent any urban or architectural design quality. In spite of the irregular urbanization, monotony and deficiency in the quality of architectural design, it can be claimed that the uniformity in unit plans of the cases is not perceived as a problem by their inhabitants. TOKI, as the administrative authority of the affordable housing provision, as the governmental mass housing administration in Turkey, should consider urban morphology as a given fact as layout and unique, should consider high quality of architecture, contemporary construction technologies, low budget, sustainability, resilience to earthquake and other disasters, construction speed and cost issues, social, physical, and cultural requirements of inhabitants. And lastly, should consider the consensus of the actors as an

outcome of the open, transparent, shared design and application process. Otherwise, during the construction, re-construction, de-construction process of capitalist geographies [8], cities in Turkey will accordingly be completely deprived of urbanism and architecture, social public and private spaces. TOKI should immediately leave the mission of being the major urban design/intervention tool of neo-liberal, profit-oriented, low profiled policies of the last government AKP (Justice and Welfare Party), and focus on creating contemporary, sustainable social housing in benefit of their inhabitants of cities in Turkey for the existence of their unique identities in the future.

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